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In-depth review of emerging issues in statistical communication

Note by the Central Statistical Office of Ireland

Summary

The present note is an an updated version of the in-depth review document on emerging issues in statistical communication that the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians discussed in October 2017. The note takes into account the outcome of the Bureau discussion.

The note summarises international activities related to the emerging issues in statistical communication, and identifies issues and challenges. The conclusions and recommendations from the review are presented in section VI, and the outcome of the Bureau discussion and follow up activities in sections VII and VIII.

The document is presented under two agenda items of the Conference: the seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication" and item 12 "Outcomes of in-depth reviews carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in October 2017 and February 2018".

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I. Executive summary

1. This review provides an overview of communications initiatives and practices at national and international levels and identifies high level communications issues and challenges facing official statistics.

2. The main findings, which are based on inputs from country experiences, can be summarised as follows:

(a) **Communications environment:** Official statistics are operating in a competitive and challenging environment. Defining the role and position of National Statistics Offices (NSOs) in the post truth environment and developing a robust social media profile are essential to maintaining the relevance of official statistics;

(b) **Strategic communications:** the practice of communications is a relatively new field for many NSOs. With limited resources and in an increasingly competitive environment, however, communications can no longer be viewed as a 'nice to have' but as a 'must have'. NSOs must build internal expertise in the field of communications;

(c) **Broadening the target audience:** Modern communications facilitate communication amongst peers (both 'one to one' and 'many to many'). This has particular relevance for the world of official statistics where traditionally communications and dissemination have focussed on the expert user. There is now a growing onus on NSOs to communicate with the citizen and improve statistical literacy across all audience cohorts;

(d) **Issue management:** Effective communication strategies need to include a proactive response strategy to issues that have the potential to cause reputational damage. Issues identified include privacy / data protection, globalisation and Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Proposals for further work include establishing a high level working group to explore the role and boundaries of NSOs in the post truth era; developing a communications framework and guidance documents to support NSOs; building expertise in building brand awareness; sharing knowledge with regard to citizen focussed communications, and building expertise in the area of proactive issue management.

II. Introduction

4. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) regularly reviews selected statistical areas in depth. The aim of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the UNECE region, identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. The review focuses on strategic issues and highlights concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and a coordinating nature.

5. The current paper provided the basis for the review by summarising the international statistical activities in the selected area, identifying issues and problems, and making recommendations on possible follow-up actions.

6. The CES Bureau selected emerging issues in statistical communication in February 2017 for an in-depth review. Central Statistics Ireland prepared the paper with input from Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, UK and UNECE.

III. Scope/definition of the statistical area covered

7. For traditional users of official statistics their value and importance is undisputed. However, the environment in which official statistics operate has changed significantly over the last twenty years. Various data sets outside of official statistics are available and the digital and social media revolutions have meant that more and more people have access to data than ever before.

8. An effective communications strategy is now essential for maintaining the relevance of official statistics in this increasingly competitive environment.

9. However, the concept of a strategic approach to communications of official statistics is a relatively new concept for most NSOs who have traditionally focussed more effort on dissemination practices.

10. While there is overlap between the practices of dissemination and communications there are significant differences between the two. Dissemination can be described as putting information out into the world in a planned fashion to as wide an audience as possible. Communications, on the other hand, is essentially about 'creating understanding' by targeting and messaging key audiences. It involves:

- tailoring and framing messages to suit particular audience cohorts;
- designing tools and channels that suit particular audience's needs;
- audience engagement initiatives and outreach programmes;
- customer consultation;
- media relations programmes;
- creating issue management response protocols; and
- measuring the results and impact of the communications.

11. In some NSOs communication is given little attention or is seen as a low priority. In others, however, it is growing in importance as many NSOs are realising the value of effective communications with regard to maintaining and enhancing the relevance of official statistics in society to as broad an audience as possible.

12. In recognition of the increasing importance of communications in today's data rich world, the aim of this in-depth review is to consider the following:

- work undertaken to date in the area of communications;
- emerging issues and challenges with regard to the communication of official statistics; and
- recommendations for future work.

IV. Overview of international statistical activities in the area

13. This section provides a brief overview of current activities in the communication of official statistics.

A. International activities related to communication

1. UNECE Workshop on Statistical Data Dissemination and Communication

14. The annual UNECE Workshops on Statistical Data Dissemination and Communication provide a forum for the community of people working in the fields of communication and dissemination of statistics in national and international statistical institutes to share knowledge, experience, ideas and resources. Each year the workshop

focuses on cutting edge ideas, new trends, experiments and approaches in the areas of data dissemination and communication. The Steering Committee of the Workshop has, in previous years, produced publications such as the "Making Data Meaningful" series.

2. Telling stories with SDG data Hackathon (5 -7 September 2017)

15. Effective communication is essential for maintaining the relevance of official statistics and maximising their value to society. Increasingly, users want answers to questions based on data. Statistical organisations can produce statistics that are more effective and can add value to products by putting the data in context and telling the broader stories based on the available facts. The hackathon is an intensive problem-solving event focussed on statistical content and in particular, effective communication. Multidisciplinary teams were challenged to "Create a user-oriented product that tells a fact based story about the younger population" within the three day timeframe. The hackathon was organized by UNECE.

3. OECD Conference on providing facts where opinions are formed: The role of official statistics in an evolving communication society (5 – 6 October 2017)

16. Official statistics should be perceived as an anchor of serious and factual information. Opinions should be formed on the basis of facts and figures and not emerge from deliberate and biased information. If official statistics are to remain relevant, they must be present on social media to provide the factual statistical information needed. This conference, organized by the OECD, will address the challenges of remaining relevant in a rapidly-evolving world and help NSOs and international organizations develop new communication strategies.

B. European Statistical System initiatives

17. The project for Digital Communication, User Analytics and Innovative Products (DIGICOM) is one of the eight projects from the European Statistical System (ESS) Vision 2020 portfolio. DIGICOM consists of four packages that run in parallel between 2016-2019:

- User analysis
- Innovative and shareable products and tools
- Open data dissemination
- Communication and promotion

18. The project aims to modernise communication and dissemination of European statistics. It is envisaged that this will be achieved by exploring and developing innovative dissemination products and services based on experiences within the ESS and the needs of European statistics users.

19. The project explores the following questions: How can NSOs better engage with users? What kind of new products and services does the user community expect? How should official statistics be communicated, in order to differentiate it from competing products and services? and How can NSOs seize the opportunities offered by recent technologies such as visualisation tools, user analytics and the semantic web?

20. A total of 18 NSOs are involved in the implementation of the DIGICOM project. A significant outcome of the project includes the collaborative networks that NSO staff establish as they work together and exchange practices.

C. Country practices

21. The countries that contributed to this paper provided details of their organisation's approach to communications. Annex 1 sets out a number of such examples.

IV. Issues and challenges

22. Following consultation with the NSOs who contributed to this paper, a number of high level communications related issues and challenges facing official statistics were identified. For the purposes of this paper these are addressed in this section under the following headings:

- Communications environment
- Strategic communications
- Broadening the audience
- Issue management

A. Communications environment

23. Since websites first went online over 25 years ago, the world has moved from the printed page, where information was delivered in stable fixed formats, to an open fluid digital environment where it is easier to publish than ever before. The downside of this evolution is that contradictory or false information can also be quickly shared and holding purveyors of falsehoods to account is increasingly difficult. However, this does not mean that facts have lost their value. They matter now more than ever. The section below explores some of the issues associated with communicating in this environment for NSOs, namely the post truth phenomenon and social media.

1. Post truth phenomenon

24. Historically, society has turned to facts or official statistics to settle debate. However, facts seem to be losing their ability to support consensus and there is no longer a single source of truth.

25. In this post truth era, social media platforms are further empowering change by providing wider and faster connectivity across a larger, and often previously untapped, audience cohort. A very different style of communicating content has emerged, one which empowers the individual, demands a shorter attention span and one where images and sound bites are preferred. Furthermore, the convergence of social media and the data revolution with movements such as populism has given rise to an environment where a myriad of truths can coexist unchecked and where leaders can establish support.

26. This environment poses a number of strategic communications challenges for NSOs such as: What is the role of a statistical office in the world of "alternative facts" and misuse of official statistics? What are the boundaries for NSOs? and What steps should NSOs take to control and protect our data and our message?

2. Social media

27. Social media has driven social change and citizens around the world are continuing to access information and express their opinions towards issues that surround them.

28. One of the challenges associated with social media is the 'filter bubble' or 'echo chamber" effect. Individuals can choose to reinforce their worldviews and exclude other views by inhabiting only segregated like-minded communities.

29. A means of counterbalancing this is to understand why certain audiences prefer a certain viewpoint. For example, members of the public may feel alienated from the official facts when they do not identify with metrics produced about the economy. Learning to understand the root of audience perspectives and create an authoritative, relevant and responsive social media profile is a key challenge for NSOs.

30. It is also important to understand that social media is not limited to networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter. It also includes all the services that enable the creation, sharing and exchange of user generated content. Each type of social media platform attracts a different audience profile. Sometimes the most popular websites may not serve an individual business' needs and it is important to select platforms appropriately.

31. The challenge for official statistics also involves understanding which style of communication works best in a given social media platform, and developing suitable messaging campaigns, which do not over simplify complex information, yet are tangible, understandable and relevant to the target audience. This involves developing new ways of communicating statistical outputs centred on compelling, and engaging content, headlines and posts.

B. Strategic communications

32. The introduction of the Internet and the associated digital revolution has meant that the role of communications within organisations has shifted from a position of a helpful tool to a "must do". With limited resources and in an increasingly competitive environment, NSOs must focus more and more on outcomes and results. To ensure relevancy, NSOs need to consistently and clearly communicate their values, purpose and differentiators through a strategic approach to communications. This section outlines some of the challenges NSOs face associated with this area, namely developing and prioritising communications, building brand awareness and measuring effectiveness.

1. Developing expertise and prioritising communications

33. The value placed on communications within NSOs is the key. Communications should be viewed as being as important as the development and production of official statistics. There is no point producing statistics unless they are relevant and can be easily understood and accessed by target audiences.

34. The purpose of strategic communication planning is to advance an organization's mission. It draws from expertise from both management and communication domains such as mass communication, public relations, marketing, advertising, participatory communication or user engagement, and dissemination.

35. Strategic communication is a recent field of study. While literature on strategic planning for businesses appeared in the 1960s and expanded in the 1970s, modern communication strategies emerged in the mid-2000s.

36. From a practitioner's standpoint, the focus of strategic communication starts with having professional communicators participate in the formulation of an organization's strategy. The strategic communication program supports the organization in realizing its mission, positions the role of the organization in society, leverages the stakeholders' influence and establishes partnerships to allow the organization to be seen, known and trusted. More importantly, the program ensures that the organization's products and services are reaching the right audiences at the right time using the most appropriate channels.

37. By building a professional communication capability, organizations will ultimately increase cohesion among their teams, better alignment and improved decision making.

38. In general terms, the objectives of a communications strategy should be to ensure that all relevant stakeholders understand the value and importance of official statistics in society. They should also be to create sustainable communications systems, processes and skills that will ensure a consistently high quality of communications between the NSO and its stakeholders. This includes adapting communications outputs to suit particular communications channels.

39. The practice of developing comprehensive communications strategies is a new approach for many NSOs and the challenge for NSOs is to build expertise in this area. This may require upskilling staff across NSOs as appropriate and the development of a network of professional communications experts working within the official statistics domain.

2. Building brand awareness

40. In addition to creating strategic communication strategies, NSOs need to look at increasing their brand recognition.

41. Building brand awareness is not just about promoting a logo; it is about communicating and living the values of an organisation in ways that resonate with the public.

42. The first phase to creating a brand would involve an assessment of the public environment – which would typically include media coverage analysis, analysis of key performance indicators related to access (who access, their satisfaction levels, etc.), and most importantly, public opinion research about the organization: How does the public view the organization? What level of trust is bestowed upon its products? What is the perceived value-added of the NSO? What could be improved? This would typically be followed by a user needs assessment that will inform the creation of target user profiles, the development of innovative approaches to more effectively reach these audiences; and the articulation of differentiated and targeted messaging that resonate with primary and secondary audiences.

43. Branding will also include developing a visual identity (logo and taglines) and messaging guidelines which will create a single, recognisable tone of voice for an organisation's communications outputs. It also involves positioning the brand via a strategic approach to all communications.

44. The report of the UNECE Task Force on the Value of official statistics [1] recognised that building brand awareness is a challenge for official statistics, one where professional expertise could be availed of.

3. Measuring effectiveness

45. Measuring the effectiveness of communications strategies is essential in order to ascertain whether implemented communications activities have enabled an organisation to meet its goals and empower it to face future challenges.

46. Measurement and evaluation against defined goals and objectives are fundamental to any communication programme, whether it be a single campaign or an on-going effort where the results are incremental over time. This practice is a new area for NSOs and numerous forums have identified that NSOs need to learn ways of measuring the effectiveness of what they communicate.

[1] The report is available at http://www.unece.org/statistics/statstos/task-force-on-the-value-of-official-statistics.html

C. Broadening the target audience

47. External communication strategies are no longer simply 'mass communication' (from one to many) exercises. The modern communications environment facilitates communication amongst peers (both 'one to one' and 'many to many').

48. In this environment, the specialised field of stakeholder communications is becoming increasingly relevant for NSOs. Understanding that not all audiences are created equal and that different cohorts will have different needs that might require a particular communications response is essential. This has particular relevance for the world of official statistics where traditionally communications and dissemination have focussed on the expert user.

1. The citizen

49. As a result of the data revolution, more and more people have access to data and statistical information. As a result of this change, there is a growing onus on NSOs to communicate with the citizen.

50. Citizen focussed communications pose a new set of communications challenges including:

- what statistical outputs are of interest to the citizen;
- how to communicate in a style that conveys the message adequately, fulfils a useful purpose and yet does not over simplify or dumb down the information?; and
- what platforms are best to communicate to an audience that prefers sound bites and simpler, faster communications?

51. Building trust in this audience is vital because the citizen possesses the potential to become the defender of official statistics. Furthermore, by empowering the citizen with this knowledge, NSOs are, in turn, empowering the citizen to hold decision makers to account.

2. Statistical literacy

52. The promotion of skills in statistical literacy and use of statistics is an on-going challenge for NSOs in the post truth era. Success in this area involves understanding the needs of differing customer groups and developing appropriate learning approaches tailored to the specific group, whether they be expert or non-expert, media, young people or the general public. A multifaceted approach is required involving the development of targeted training programmes; social media friendly products and services and competition based initiatives for younger audiences.

53. The importance of 'statistical storytelling' or 'narrative' is an important means of engaging with audiences and developing statistical literacy. People hear statistics, but they feel stories and despite information overload, audiences are still drawn to interesting and relevant stories. An added benefit of this approach is that it also enables richer discussion as data from a number of different sources (e.g. social, economic, environmental etc.) can be discussed together in relation to topics of interest.

54. In terms of communicating official statistics, this means speaking with the people's voice and understanding the user-perspective. Communicating in this way is a challenge for many NSOs who have traditionally disseminated information in a fashion designed only to target expert users.

D. Issue management

55. Effective communication strategies should include a proactive response strategy to issues that have the potential to cause reputational damage. Identifying these issues in advance and preparing responses is essential. This section identifies some of the issues that relate to the world of official statistics and which may require proactive response preparation.

1. Privacy and data protection

56. Big data use is expected to grow exponentially and experimentation using sources such as mobile phone data is taking place in the world of official statistics. The potential of new data sources to provide insight into emerging social and economic trends is immense – but they also present new challenges that are technical, legal and statistical.

57. Consumers are becoming more wary of the vast amounts of data now collected about them – with high-profile data breaches continuing to make the headlines. The challenges for NSOs who are experimenting with the use of Big Data sources or who use online systems for collecting personal data is to effectively reassure the public that confidentiality is a priority and that they will never disclose any data that could subsequently be associated with any person or business.

58. Common messaging could be developed across NSOs to address these concerns. For example, Frequently Asked Questions could be prepared to support the work NSOs are undertaking in this area.

2. Globalisation

59. The effect of globalisation on GDP figures in small open highly globalised economies has led many commentators to question the usefulness of the indicators to measure domestic economies. A striking example of this was the 26% jump in Irish GDP in 2015 due to the relocation of intellectual property assets. Issues arising from the effect of globalisation are likely to continue to emerge and there is a challenge here to clarify the situation for both statistical users and importantly the general public.

60. Failure to communicate the effects of globalisation can lead to experts and non-experts questioning the legitimacy of official statistics and in turn cause reputational damage to an organisation. It may also lead to target audiences turning to alternative sources of data, outside of official statistics.

61. NSOs whose statistical outputs may be affected by globalisation need to ensure that they develop multi-layered communications strategies which target the expert user, the medium users, the media and the wider public.

3. Sustainable Development Goals

62. In early 2017, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted a measurement framework for the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, comprising over 230 indicators designed to measure the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the respective 169 targets. These universal goals cover all three key development pillars: economic, social and environmental. There are a number of potential communications challenges relating to the implementation of SDGs which include the following:

(a) Given the broad range of indicators it will be difficult to distil an overall sense or message regarding a country from such a broad range of indicators. It is likely that

with so many indicators different indicator groups may be moving in different and inconsistent directions leading to confusion and uncertainty.

(b) Different countries may use varying data sources and as such different underlying methodologies in developing their indicators. This could make cross-country comparisons difficult resulting in a communications challenge.

(c) The institutional settings of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) differ and the level of independence afforded the NSS may affect the credibility of the indicators. This again could lead to a communications challenge with regard to cross-country comparisons.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations for discussion by the Bureau

A. Conclusions

63. This document identifies a number of issues and challenges relating to the communication of official statistics. A common thread underlying many of the discussion points raised is the challenging communications environment in which official statistics currently operate.

64. In the last quarter of a century the world has moved from the printed page, where information was delivered in stable fixed formats, to an open fluid digital environment. The negative side of this evolution is that official statistics are no longer seen as the 'single source' of truth. A multitude of other data sources now exist and facts and alternative facts exist in social media forums side by side.

65. In this "post truth" environment the public is increasingly inclined to take a view based on intuition rather than fact. This descent into the world of "truth feelings" is a complex phenomenon that is not easily explained. It is, however, likely linked to a growing loss of trust in institutions as a result of events such as the 2007-2009 financial crisis, combined with changes in the way the public consumes information.

66. The overall challenge for NSOs is how to build 'trust' and stay relevant in this new world era. The solution is not simple but one of the ways NSOs can proactively respond is to develop a strategic approach to communicating their purpose, rationale and outputs.

67. However, the practice of communications is a relatively new field for many NSOs. Most have traditionally focussed on the related field of dissemination which can be described as putting information out into the world in a planned fashion. Communications, on the other hand, goes a step beyond this approach as its purpose is to 'create understanding' amongst target audience groups.

68. Effective communications involves understanding audience needs and shaping tools, channels and outputs to respond to those particular needs. It also involves pre-empting and preparing for potential issues which could cause reputational damage to an organisation.

69. Increasingly, NSOs are recognising the value of effective communications strategies with regard to maintaining the relevance of official statistics. With limited resources and in an increasingly competitive environment, however, communications can no longer be viewed as a 'nice to have' but as a 'must have'. Accepting the "new normal" of the post truth environment and being proactive in communicating and creating understanding is critical to maintaining the long term relevance of official statistics.

70. Finally, it is worth mentioning that prioritising communications within NSOs does not mean that the on-going excellent dissemination practices, which meet the needs of a

narrower yet still very important suite of users (e.g. academics and researchers, etc.), are less important or should be done away with. Rather it should serve to complement and reinforce this important and relevant work.

B. Recommendations

71. In response to the communications related issues and challenges discussed in this review paper, a number of recommendations for future work have been identified designed to support NSOs in prioritising communications. These are as follows:

1. Communications environment

72. In an increasingly competitive post truth environment, NSOs must start to explore their market position.

73. In this regard, it is recommended that a high level working group be established to conduct a 'positioning' exercise. The group would explore fundamental questions such as what do we do now and why, how do we want to be seen and what should our role be? The process would culminate in an agreed position statement that would help to distinguish products and services of NSOs from those of competitors and reach consensus on role boundaries.

2. Strategic communications

74. In order to support NSOs in implementing a strategic approach to communications, the development of a **Communications Framework** is recommended. This would involve structuring a tool kit comprising guidance on:

- The strategic communications development process e.g. positioning, communications environment analysis; identification of communications values and principles; identification of issues and challenges; identification of communications objectives; organisational strategic alignment; and creating the plan;
- Best practice with regard to measuring success;
- Organisational communications maturity model.

75. Building brand awareness forms part of a communications strategy and is intrinsically linked to all communications outputs. In order to support NSOs in building their brand the following recommendations are also proposed:

- development of generic guidance on building brand awareness; and
- brand experts invited to workshops to discuss topics such as social media, content marketing, and market positioning.

3. Broadening the target audience

76. Understanding that the target audience base for NSOs is no longer primarily confined to the expert user but must be expanded to recognise the increasingly important role of the citizen and the citizen as a key user group is crucial. The challenge for NSOs is to build awareness of official statistics amongst the wider, non-expert audience.

77. Many NSOs are experimenting with ways of communicating to the citizen. Knowledge sharing and learning across organisations in forums such as the UNECE Workshop on Statistical Data Dissemination and Communication should be prioritised. For example, discussions around topics such as building statistical literacy via storytelling and

narrative, experimental social media campaigns, and new citizen focussed statistical outputs should form part of the workshop agenda.

4. Issue management

78. A proactive approach to issue management is an integral part of a communications strategy. In order to support NSOs in this area the following is recommended:

- Development of a generic guidance document with regard to issue management to include issue identification, internal and external communications protocols (e.g. who gets told what, when and how), drafting of holding statements, Q&A development, spokesperson training and preparation and the use of external expertise as appropriate.
- Issue / crisis management scenario planning workshops for NSOs inviting external expertise. This work would involve both communications and subject matter staff.
- Encourage task teams and meetings to share experiences on how they communicate about their subject matter.
- Agenda items at the UNECE Workshop on Statistical Data Dissemination and Communications to discuss current and potential issues and knowledge / experience sharing with regard to the issues listed above.

VII. In-depth review discussion and decisions by the Bureau

79. The in-depth review paper (ECE/CES/BUR/2017/OCT/2), prepared by the Central Statistical Office of Ireland summarised international activities related to the emerging issues in statistical communication, and identified issues and challenges in the area.

80. The discussion at the CES Bureau meeting in October 2017 included the following points:

(a) There is strong support for considering statistical communication from a strategic viewpoint. The changing environment where official statistics operate pushes to redefine their relevance and role;

(b) Statistical organizations should look at communication strategies in a broader context of risk management and business continuity;

(c) Further work should focus on a common understanding at the strategic level of communication rather than trying to harmonize the actions and tactics;

(d) A broad range of topics could be examined. A strategic approach to communications, issue and crisis management, communication principles, measuring the success and impact of communication are of particular interest;

(e) The necessity to act in real-time environment (e.g., through tweets and social media) poses an additional challenge of how to make the subject matter and communications experts work together and who can be the spokesperson for official statistics;

(f) The work should use available material about communications from outside official statistics;

(g) It will be useful to establish priorities among the list of challenges in statistical communication identified through the review, and focus the work. It is important to share experiences and develop guidance based on good practices. The actions should be

considered in connection with work in other related areas, such as strategic partnerships, value of official statistics, capability development, etc.;

(h) It will be useful to get input from more countries about their challenges and issues in communication.

VIII. Follow up activities

81. Each year a Workshop on the Modernisation of Official Statistics is held in November that reviews the work undertaken under the auspices of the High Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) during that year. The workshop also considers proposals for work to be undertaken in the following year. In December 2017, HLG MOS approved a project for 2018 on Strategic Communication.

82. The project will focus on enabling NSOs to modernise their communications at the strategic level. It will include the following work packages:

- Work Package 1: Guidelines on the strategic communications development process;
- Work Package 2: Best practices on defining a position in the new communications environment;
- Work Package 3: Guidelines on issue and reputation management.

83. The project to develop a Strategic Communication Framework was launched in February 2018 with a sprint session attended by experts from Australia, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, and the United Kingdom. The Sprint team identified the main outputs of the project and developed an outline document of the strategic framework.

84. Strategic communications and issue management will be discussed further in the CES Seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication" and at the 2018 Workshop on Statistical Data Dissemination and Communication, which will be held in Cork, Ireland on 25-27 June. The outcomes of both events will directly feed into the HLG-MOS Strategic Communication Framework project.

Annex

I. Country approaches to communications

1. The following section outlines the approach to communications undertaken in some UNECE member countries.

A. Austria

2. For Statistics Austria, a modern provider of high-quality information for society, science, business, politics and administration, it is essential not only to produce data about relevant facts of life, but also to communicate them effectively and proactively.

3. "Transformation of data into information" is one of five main pillars of Statistics Austria's current "Strategy 2020". Together with other objectives, as e.g. "modern, integrated data production" and "relevance to society", this topic has high priority. The "Strategy 2020" continues Statistics Austria's work on earlier communicative strategy projects (such as branding, marketing activities or media training), but raises the topic to a new level: conventional communication of results is no longer sufficient, it is necessary to distil information from the data and offer it to users in a comprehensible form.
Some of the relevant projects of "Strategy 2020" deal with

- enhancement of data visualization and information graphics;
- expansion of social media activities;
- evaluation and improvement of Statistics Austria's website;
- topic-oriented publications;
- app development; and
- improvement of the statistical database STATCube.

Media cooperation with impact on social media

4. In line with "Strategy 2020", Statistics Austria began cooperating with the renowned weekly newspaper "Falter" in September 2016. Since then, each issue of the magazine contains a page titled "Numbers! The weekly conversation about new data and hard facts", presenting statistical insights on a relevant topic. The page consists of a custom-made infographic and an interview with Statistics Austria's Director General, who explains details of the subject in a comprehensible way. Collaboration with "Falter" goes far beyond traditional media cooperation: it definitely pays off regarding its reception – especially on Twitter. The tweets with the weekly Falter infographics are always among Statistics Austria's most retweeted and liked "top tweets".

B. Canada

5. The Communication Program ensures that Statistics Canada is seen, known and trusted by Canadians, and that the information published is broadly used.

6. This work is conducted by communication experts, with sections organized by functions:

- Official release;
- Media relations;
- Strategic communications and issue management;
- Outreach and events;

- Social media and online engagement;
- Client consultations;
- Writing, translation and editorial services;
- Internal communications;
- Respondent communications.

7. The Communication Program leads the Agency-wide governance, policy and accountability frameworks for these functions, ensuring they comply with governing legislation and central agency direction. The DG responsible for the program is accountable for the effective and timely provision of official statistics and related information to news media, the general public, governments, the academic community, businesses, private organizations, institutions and international organizations all the while maintaining a constructive relationship with them.

8. Having communications planned, executed and evaluated in a single area maximizes the coherence, quality and effectiveness of all agency communications. Every product, activity, tool is reused and repurposed across channels and functions for maximum reach—coordination is key.

9. A set of communication policies and guidelines ensures that innovative work and new initiatives remain aligned with its core commitments:

- All Canadians have equal access to new data at the same time;
- High-quality and accurate information is shared on all channels;
- Ongoing collaboration with stakeholders, data users and decision makers is key to remaining connected, visible and relevant;
- Leading-edge methods are leveraged for maximum efficiency and impact.

10. All communications activities – from planning through to media relations and issue management, all the way to engagement and channel development – support the above commitments.

C. Finland

11. Communication is an important element of Statistics Finland's operations, management, stakeholder cooperation and influence. Communication supports the strategic choices of the organisation, helps foresee future needs and agilely react to new challenges.

12. The communication principles at Statistics Finland are based on the values and strategy of Statistics Finland, and the ethics and principles of the official statistics of Finland. The basic communication principles are:

- Reliability;
- independence and impartiality;
- openness and interaction;
- proactivity and timeliness, and
- understandability.

13. Communication affects the public image and reputation of official statistics and Statistics Finland. In Finland, 86 per cent of the population knows Statistics Finland and 85 per cent believe statistics are reliable. Statistics are widely trusted in society and Statistics Finland wants to maintain this trust. Communication makes Statistics Finland stand out as a producer of quality and factual data, improves the retrievability and accessibility of

statistical data, and increases interaction with customers. Communication makes statistics accessible and Statistics Finland visible in society. Successful communication promotes statistical literacy.

14. Communication directed at data suppliers is also part of the communication activities. The aim of data supplier communication is to motivate the data supplier in order to receive high-quality data and increase response rates.

15. Communication involves the entire organisation and is part of everyone's work. The use of new communication channels (social media, videos) and active participation in social discussion with statistical data (blogs, online articles, and social media posts) strengthen fact-based decision-making in society.

D. Germany

16. In Germany, Destatis has developed a comprehensive communication strategy based on 5 pillars:

- strengthen the brand of "official statistics",
- improve access,
- meet the needs of target groups,
- expand the dialogue, and
- improve understandability.

17. In relation to brand awareness, key aspects of Destatis's communications strategy include:

"Open Copyright"

18. Destatis has started to clearly display its copyright brand "Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis)" in graphs and readymade tables that can be used by newspapers, magazines and other sources. These ready-to-use interactive graphs can be used in different internet platforms making the official statistics brand more widely known.

Content marketing

19. Destatis has also started to create brand awareness through content marketing, a new trend currently used by leading German enterprises such as Daimler and Telekom. At Destatis, content marking is carried out using software research: which topics are being discussed in different websites; which ones have a high relevance; which statistics are not well represented; and how to bring statistics into websites where this is little or no use of Destatis official statistics. In relation to the latter, this can be achieved by making new statistical contents available for websites or by simply making the website owners aware of existing statistical products and highlighting the advantages of having this statistical information. When websites agree to incorporate statistical data from Destatis success is achieved.

20. The use of content marketing is a significant institutional cultural change for Destatis. No longer is it sufficient to merely produce statistical products for user needs. The goal now is to place these products in as many relevant platforms as possible in order to increase their impact.

E. Ireland

21. In 2017, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) established a press office for the first time and developed a strategic approach to communications to cover the period 2017 - 2019.

22. Specifically, the objectives of this strategy are to:

- ensure that all external CSO communications are of a high standard and are responsive, cohesive, co-ordinated and aligned to the CSO's strategic objectives;
- strengthen and improve stakeholder's knowledge and understanding of the value and relevance of official statistics with an increasing focus on the citizen; and
- promote the CSO as relevant, responsive, ambitious, and innovative.

23. The strategy includes a number of lead projects such as rebranding the CSO, the establishment of a press office, a citizen focussed campaign, visualisation strategy, social media strategy, media strategy, customer focus strategy and website refocus / redesign.

24. In relation to the post truth challenge, Ireland has adopted a response to the problem based on the following three tenets of being competitive, authoritative and collaborative as follows:

Competitive	• Competitive advantage / Brand, e.g. promote the values and rebrand
	• Be relevant, e.g. new reports which address key decision making information gaps
	• Citizen focus, e.g. develop new products and campaigns for the general public. Develop new ways of visualisation
	• New platforms, e.g. explore and expand social media / digital presence
	• Explore partnerships, e.g. visualisation projects with other public sector bodies
Authoritative	• Respond, correct, clarify, e.g. revert to media when information is used incorrectly.
	• Educate, educate, educate, e.g. education media and users as well as younger audiences
Collaborative	• Share & learn, e.g. work with our international counterparts
	• Create allies with media and opinion formers, e.g. relationship building media to gain feedback and establish contacts

F. United Kingdom

25. In Office for National Statistics (ONS) the communications approach is driven by the goal of supporting the 'Better Statistics, Better Decisions' strategy set out by the UK Statistics Authority. In particular there is a significant emphasis on making sure that ONS supports users to make decisions based on high-quality statistics.

26. There is a dedicated digital publishing function within ONS that develops the website, creates visual and other digital products, and also manages social media. The ONS

has categorised its online users into a number of "personas", and different digital channels are used to target them. These are the "expert user", the "information forager" and the "enquiring citizen".

27. ONS works closely with the media to ensure its statistics are communicated widely. For market-sensitive economic statistics, wire journalists (i.e. Bloomberg, Reuters) are invited to attend lock-in sessions prior to the release of statistics so they are able to ask questions and ensure the accuracy of their stories, but without risking the early release of said statistics.

28. There is also a dedicated "User Insight and Engagement" function that focuses on developing how the organisation engages with its users and gathering intelligence on the external environment so the organisation can make better informed choices about how it communicates and engages with the outside world.

29. Internally, ONS is establishing a central intelligence function (part of the User Insight and Engagement team) that is looking to pull together information from a range of sources to provide both ad hoc and regular information to the rest of the organisation so that ONS better understands the external context in which it operates in and how it can engage with it. Examples of the information being collected, analysed and disseminated internally include feedback from stakeholder engagement, consultations and policy initiatives taking place elsewhere in Government, public surveys of what topics people are most concerned about, and topics that are being highlighted in the media.